

wish to succeed, but because their manner of life had destroyed in them the spirit of wisdom. Concentration and the critical spirit on small points were fatal to circumspection."

I have seen enough examples in practical life to fully confirm this man's words. Moreover, his statements are in harmony with the principles of sound philosophy. He who is constantly dwelling upon a single idea, however vital and valuable it may be, is sure to so centralize all of his powers upon it as to make him practically indifferent to many other equally important affairs. Take the case of one who makes temperance the one absorbing theme of his life and energy. It soon comes to pass that he fully believes that intemperance is the greatest sin on earth, and hence that temperance is the greatest of all good causes. Day and night he broods over the question, and one of the worst features of the situation is, the man has made himself believe that all who do not think as he does on the matter are in "complicity with the liquor traffic," even tho all other temperance people protest that they have the cause at heart as much as he has.

OPTIMISM vs PESSIMISM

B. C. MOOMAW

I have neither the courage nor the ability to enter the lists with so notable a pessimist as Brother Cassel, nor am I qualified to do so by any pronounced conviction that he is either right or wrong. According to his own opinion "the most godly saint that ever lived is a pack of error," which is notice in advance that we should be very careful how we receive his opinions and doctrines. But I think this estimate of "the most godly saint," or even of Brother Cassel himself, is a little too pessimistic, and will cheerfully join his innumerable friends in allowing him to hold it all by himself.

Now altho I am an optimist, do you suppose I am going to stand up against Brother Cassel's proposition that the world will not be saved by grace in this dispensation? I am not sure that an optimist is bound to believe that the world will be saved by grace during this present dispensation. I am not disposed to accept Brother Cassel's definition of an optimist. There is the broad and unmistakably Scriptural view of the ultimate triumph of all righteousness. On that sunny height the true optimist stands and rejoices. He believes that all things, this dispensation of grace, the operation of God's providence in the world, among the nations, in the evolution of knowledge and science, which is but another revelation of God,—that all things, all things, are *tending toward* this final triumph of righteousness, and not *away* from it. The pessimist believes that at least for the time being the tendency of all things is *away* from the universal Kingdom, and that it can only be, and will only be, established by catastrophe. An optimist cannot

conceive of *anything* that God does not *either ordain, or permit, or over-rule*, both for progressive righteousness, and for its ultimate triumph. If this proposition can be successfully controverted, I will be the first one to abandon it. If it cannot be overthrown, the pessimist has lost his job, and ought to be honest enough to admit it. He is going to lose his job anyhow, for the time will certainly come when there will be no pessimists at all, certainly none outside of a very warm place. I feel concerned for Brother Cassel.

Now here's the last man who would deny the fact and office of catastrophe in God's moral government of the world. According to Genesis the first dispensation was ended by catastrophe, in the flood. According to authentic history the second dispensation was ended by catastrophe, in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. Civilizations, kingdoms, empires, almost without number, have been ended by catastrophe. We ourselves pass from the temporal to the eternal not by evolution but by the catastrophe of death. It is easy to reason from analogy that in the end all things will be changed by the same method; yet we cannot be perfectly certain of it, because we know that God changes his method sometimes; and also because we cannot be perfectly sure that a "pack of error" can be relied upon to elucidate the profound mysteries of prophecy.

There are so many difficulties in the way, so many unsolved problems. Let us mention one of them, not in a spirit of doubt, but of inquiry, of really earnest desire for light and truth. Brother Cassel quotes, as the corner stone of his theory, its foundation, its rock, those passages in Matt 24; Mark 13, and Luke 21, which are popularly supposed to refer to the coming end of the world. But in all these records our Lord states most distinctly and definitely with the added emphasis of that characteristic "verily" which he employed when profoundly in earnest, that "*this generation shall not pass until all be fulfilled*." Why is this statement ignored by the "pessimists?" I would cheerfully appeal to Brother Cassel to "explain away" this positive and repeated statement of our Lord, but he can't do it. That is to say, he is *debarred* from doing it by the principle of interpretation which he announces in his article. He says, "I believe the word of God means what it says and says what it means." That settles it, and comment is entirely superfluous. It is impossible for Brother Cassel to apply any of these dreadful prophecies of our Lord to the *final, the coming* end of the world, for the Master distinctly and emphatically states that they apply wholly and alone to *that generation* and to *the Jews*. No literalist can escape from that conclusion, let him wriggle never so much.

But I am not a literalist to that extent, and I have my interpretation of those prophecies which however is not germane to this discussion. I do not believe that the Scriptures always "mean what they say, or say what they mean." I do not believe, for example,

when our Lord said, "Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, ye have no life in you," that he "meant what he said and said what he meant." To the disciples who understood it literally, it was a "hard saying," and many of them left him because they "could not hear it." "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Only those remained who were *privately taught* the *spiritual, the hidden, the symbolical* meaning of it, and that is the kind of disciple who is nearest to the truth and nearest to the Lord to day. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. The Master employed the same method in the parables, and the multitudes who *heard what he said missed what he meant*; and what is most remarkable, he *meant* for them to miss it. Like the pot of manna and the tables of the law in the Ark of the Covenant, truth, its very choicest treasures, are locked up in parable and symbolism, and only those find it who *care enough* to "search" for it, diligently, prayerfully, persistently.

But this is doubtless somewhat aside from the subject under discussion. In reply to Brother Cassel's challenge in the last paragraph of his article, I will say that quite a respectable array of Scripture texts can be cited in support of the views of that pernicious "optimist" whom he denounces so vigorously. I will only mention two and "leave the subject with the Brethren." Let us take Luke 13: 18 21: "Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like, and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened."

Now in the first place these "parables undoubtedly refer to the present gospel dispensation. That is unquestionable.

In the second place they teach that the kingdom of God is to be established, not by sudden catastrophe, of which they give not the slightest hint, but by *gradual growth* and *gradual transformation*. That can't be denied, either.

Now I do not pretend to say that these texts settle the whole question. They meet Brother Cassel's challenge, however, and they serve to show that it is not well for a man to be so dead certain that he is right, and the other fellow all wrong, particularly since the best of us are only a "pack of error." As a matter of fact, truth is a tremendously wide proposition, and our intellectual relations to it may easily be that of the ant to the world, who being a very wise ant, taught, preached, printed and published, that the walls of the garden in which he lived were the bounds of the universe.

It is really funny to see such a splendid optimist as Brother Cassel trying to make himself and his brethren believe that he is a pessimist. We all know better. It is one of